

FY04 Army Experimental Test Pilot Board

The FY04 Army Experimental Test Pilot (XTP) Board will convene on or about Feb. 18, 2004, to select those aviators best qualified to participate in the Army Aviation XTP Training Program. This board will review and select both commissioned and warrant officers. Commissioned officers selected to attend the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) are automatically accessed into the Army Acquisition Corps, where they will serve for the remainder of their careers.

The Army Human Resources Command-Alexandria must receive applications for the FY04 Army XTP Board by Jan. 9, 2004. Applications should be mailed to Commander, U.S. Army Human Resources Command-Alexandria, ATTN: AHRC-OPF-Q (MAJ Donovan), 200 Stovall St., Alexandria, VA 22332-0411. Applications must include the following:

- Application memorandum signed by the officer and endorsed through the chain of command (O-6 level).
- Current Department of the Army photo.
- Officer Record Brief.
- Official transcripts of college credits.
- Copy of most current DA Form 759, Individual Flight Record and Flight Certificate-Army.
- Endorsements by instructor/standardization pilots with specific comments on the applicant's flying ability.

XTP utilization assignments will be based on the Army's needs. Most initial tours are served at the Aviation Technical Test Center at Fort Rucker, AL. USNTPS graduates will serve in XTP or organizational staff positions that directly influence the type, design and configuration of Army aircraft.

For additional information or to request a sample application memorandum, contact MAJ Sharlene Donovan at (703) 325-5479, (DSN) 221-5479 or e-mail at Sharlene.Donovan@hoffman.army.mil. Warrant officers should contact CW4 Lee Tutin at (703) 325-5228, (DSN) 221-5228 or e-mail at Lee.Tutin@hoffman.army.mil.

NEWS BRIEFS

TACOM/Industry Logistics Symposium

The 13th annual U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM)/Industry Logistics Symposium will be held April 6-8, 2004 at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Dearborn, MI. This logistics symposium brings together government and industry personnel to discuss issues and concerns relevant to the constant changes in the logistics environment. The symposium will offer formal presentations, workshops, exhibits, demonstrations and open discussions and will emphasize how logistics contributes to transforming the Armed Forces. Symposium speakers will discuss logistics transformation, lean logistics, recapitalization and Army transformation. Speakers will also discuss the impact of logistics on Homeland Defense, U.S. Joint Forces in combat, technology development and exploitation, logistics support to *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Future Combat Systems, sense-and-respond logistics and resetting the Army structure back to pre-war conditions. For additional information on the symposium, call Cherice Carter, TACOM Symposium Chairperson, at (586) 574-4175, or go to the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) Web site at <http://www.ndia.org>.

New Spatial Decision Support System Coming to U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

Intricately detailed, astonishingly beautiful poster-size maps of the terrain on and around U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, AZ, lay across a large table at the Range Scheduling Office. The breathtaking work involved in each and every computerized map, printable from any of the many plotters throughout the Proving Ground, speaks impressively.

Gary Burris, Range Safety Officer and Range Controller, pours over the multitudinous reproductions of colorful ridges, gullies, washes, gorges, flatlands and hills

throughout the Proving Ground's Cibola Firing Range, squinting at what looks like an old airfield never before shown on a map. "These maps are part of a system getting a life of its own," Burris said. "This new system is the Spatial Decision Support System (SDSS) and will soon be accessible from the desktop of all Yuma Test Center personnel, as well as fire and police personnel," he continued.

Providing project focus, guidance and direction is Dave Lashlee, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) manager. The SDSS system features a database of maps for Yuma Proving Ground and the adjacent vicinity covering several thousand square miles. The maps included in the new database will all be standardized. The old system's maps, though done well, were overlapping, redundant and without a common scale.



Gary Burris, Range Safety Officer and Range Controller, draws a safety fan by hand for a recent test, knowing the process will soon be computerized.

Under SDSS, the new universalized maps will be top-driven from the state of Arizona using a Data Share Agreement with the following agencies: the U.S. Department of the Interior; Bureau of Land Management; Yuma Field Office Bureau of Indian Affairs; Bureau of Reclamation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Park Service; U.S. Border Patrol; U.S. Geological Survey; Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma; Arizona Department of Transportation; Arizona Game and Fish Department; Arizona Department of Corrections; and City of Yuma, Yuma County for Digital Geospatial Data Sharing and Integration.

"Having all test and rescue personnel maps equivalent will be a great asset to the Proving Ground," Lashlee said. "There will be many software tools from which to interact with the mapping database that will allow a person to zoom in to an area down to the meter. Unexploded ordnance on test sites will be able to become part of the history of a test, stored on the test's CD, archived for use should a similar test come up," Lashlee explained.

Intricate maps of danger zones — or what is called safety fans — surrounding test areas, will be a key

feature of the system unique to Yuma Proving Ground. A safety fan, or unsafe area, extends along the trajectory of all airborne projectiles. As the projectile reaches its target, the safety fan is at its maximum width. When a trajectory is rerouted because of safety concerns, the safety fan goes along with the rerouted trajectory path. The new mapping software will have tools that can drag a safety fan to an adjacent or new area.

Software developer Heather Knight said she is excited about the new interactive software specific to safety fan manipulation. "We will be able to use what we do at the Proving Ground as a prototype for other installations needing this kind of maneuverability with their safety zones," Knight remarked.

The faster a projectile, the greater the safety fan is at the impact area. When working with ordnance at Yuma Proving Ground, there are other factors to take into account when de-

termining the area of a safety fan, such as the rate of projectile spin, type of fuse, as well as the amount and kind of ammunition and explosives used. The use of a standard computerized map base will allow rescue personnel to see exactly what route to take to bypass tests in progress and go as quickly as possible to the scene of an accident or unexploded munition.

Burris, who is acquainted with the routing and rerouting of safety fans to accommodate the most tests in the shortest amount of time, said he really likes the idea of involving rescue personnel when it comes to using a standardized mapping database. His office will be the focal point for all incoming test agendas proposed through the mapping software. Digitizing the range maps will make his duties a lot easier and quicker, he said. It will be a lot different than using pen and wall-long, hand-drawn maps.

Isabel Goode, Test Director at the Proving Ground's Munitions and Weapons Division, said testers knew it was time to update the Proving Ground's 1973 mapping system by incorporating GIS capabilities. "We were trying to take baby steps to get there," she said, "but we

just have had too much to do, so the effort went by the wayside.”

“With SDSS,” she said, “we’re looking to the future. Instead of erasers and markers, we will have state-of-the-art maps depicting all of our firing ranges so we can pull up by date and see what is being used that day and what is not. And the best part is, we will be able to access it from our desktops,” she concluded.

This article and the accompanying photograph were submitted by Marcia Chavez, Writer-Editor, Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground.

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

On May 22, 2003, the Detroit Arsenal at Warren, MI, hosted the *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, a program sponsored by the Acquisition Support Center as part of its FY03 Regional Training Plan. With help from the U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) Learning Center (TLC), more than 250 Warren associates attended the leadership program.

The *21 Laws* program is based on the popular book by John C. Maxwell, founder of Injoy Inc., an organization dedicated to helping people maximize their personal and leadership potential. Maxwell is also an inspirational speaker and author of more than 22 books. The program was delivered by Richard Biggs, an inspirational speaker, author and close friend and protégé of John Maxwell.

For this 1-day seminar, Acquisition Career Manager (ACM) Bob Sivalelli and late TLC Associate Dan Osinski carefully selected 9 laws for Biggs to discuss, thereby complementing a current TACOM *Desired Traits of Leadership* initiative that the Warren community has employed during the last 2 years.

The Arsenal adopted these *Desired Traits* as a direct response to feedback from a number of survey instruments used to gauge organizational climate, morale

and overall employee perception of past leadership practices. More recent feedback indicates that issues of trust, personal growth, communication and personal sacrifice are still at the top of employees’ concerns.

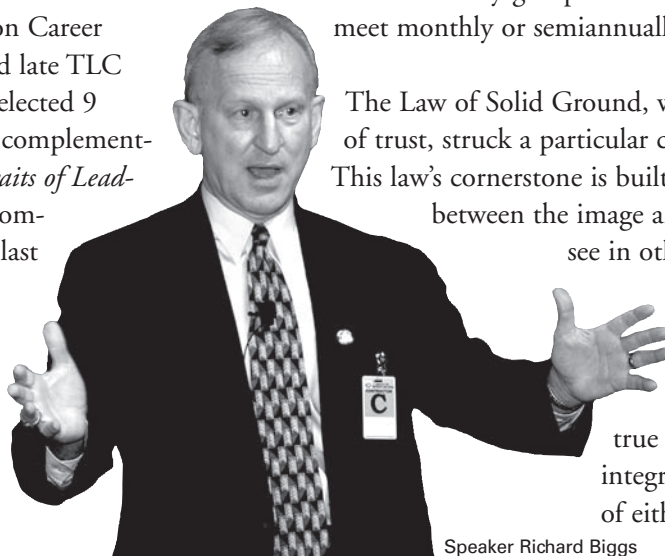
The 9 laws Biggs covered included: the Law of the Lid, Law of Solid Ground, Law of Process, Law of Buy-In, Law of Sacrifice, Law of Navigation, Law of Connection, Law of Empowerment and Law of Respect.

Biggs, who authored *Burn Brightly Without Burning Out*, provided real-life examples to emphasize the consequences of not employing each of the 9 laws covered.

During the program introduction, TACOM Acquisition Career Management Advocate (ACMA) Harry Hallock addressed the audience to communicate the command’s desire to improve the leadership qualities of associates at every level of the organization, but especially of its supervisors and managers. Hallock touched on 6 desired traits including leadership, communications, strategic planning, organizational climate, teaming and employee support. He also stressed that the command expects its managers and supervisors to hold to these tenets in dealing with their subordinates, peers and superiors, and that every command employee has a right to expect no less from their supervisors. Hallock made the connection between the TACOM *Desired Traits* and the *9 Laws of Leadership* that Biggs would discuss.

Biggs asked the audience if they had a “master plan for personal growth.” He gave tips on how to create routines that help forge habits that lend to personal growth. For example, he suggested making time to read from a good book at least 15 minutes every day and to belong to accountability groups or mastermind groups that meet monthly or semiannually.

The Law of Solid Ground, which addresses the issue of trust, struck a particular chord in many attendees. This law’s cornerstone is built on the understanding between the image and integrity of what you see in others. Image is what others think you are, which may or may not be true, but integrity is the real you — being true to yourself. Some key integrity busters are the abuse of either money or power.



Speaker Richard Biggs

The audience was challenged to complete action items to take back home or to the workplace to implement. Afterward, audience members gave positive feedback on Biggs' presentation, citing him as an excellent speaker and motivator, and requesting that he come back again. Other attendees agreed that *21 Laws* was one of the best classes on leadership they had ever attended. A common feeling among attendees was captured best by this statement: "I came away feeling very motivated to go out and put into action that which I had just heard!"

The *21 Laws* program was a huge success and the Warren community is now equipped with additional tools to practice leadership and personal goal setting.

HARRY HALLOCK is the Director for Research and Development and Base Operations Contracting at TACOM in Warren, MI. He has a B.S. in business administration from the University of Delaware and an M.S. in program management from the Naval Postgraduate School. He is a member of the Army Acquisition Corps and is Level III certified in Contracting, Program Management and Life Cycle Logistics. In addition, he is Level II certified in Test and Evaluation Engineering.

ROBERT SIVALELLI is TACOM's ACM. He has a master's degree in public administration from Central Michigan University. He is Level III certified in Contracting, Level II certified in Program Management and is Corps Eligible.

TARDEC Becomes ISO-14001 Certified

"We can not afford to act irresponsibly when it comes to the environment. The day will come when all government labs are expected to have an ISO [International Organization for Standardization] certified environmental protection process or equivalent. Why wait for someone to make us comply when it is obviously the right thing to do?"

Dr. Richard McClelland
TARDEC Director

Echoing McClelland's remarks, U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC) associates attended a ceremony

celebrating the certification of TARDEC's Environmental Management System — the first Army research and development center to become ISO-14001 certified.

Three years in the making, TARDEC achieved its goal to become third-party certified by passing both Stages 1 and 2 of a formal certification audit. Audit findings — performed by CRS Registrars Inc., Maumee, Ohio — indicated outstanding conformance to American National Standards Institute/ISO 14001: 1996. Auditors also evaluated TARDEC's self-imposed strict environmental policy, which ensures compliance to all local, state and federal environmental regulations and goes extra steps to further minimize pollution, educate employees about the Environmental Management System and reinforce commitment to a proactive environmental policy.

Noting TARDEC's proactive environmental stance, CRS President Bill Niedzwiecki stated, "TARDEC took their environmental policy to the next level by taking the initiative and adding accountability by seeking third-party certification." The certification is applicable to TARDEC's research, development and engineering of military ground vehicle systems and associated weapon systems.

Certification is not the end of TARDEC's ISO 14001 efforts, but rather the beginning of a brand new chapter in the ISO Environmental Management System journey. TARDEC is now embarking down the challenging road of maintaining the Environmental Management System. According to McClelland, "Our mission is to be proactive and to avoid non-conformances at all costs. We must continue the task of further developing the culture of our workforce to sustain this program. ISO will continue to be an integral part of our daily work environment."

Despite the challenge of sustaining the system, TARDEC is taking a few minutes to relish this tough achievement, which was not an easy thing to do and is a real accomplishment for both TARDEC and the U.S. Army.

Monica F. Kapso is a Project Officer with TARDEC's Operations Business Group. She has a B.S. from Oakland University, Rochester, MI.

TARDEC Robotics Mobility Lab's ODIS Robot



Figure 1.

One of the Army's leading research and development centers, the U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC), recently participated in an experimental study with the Omni Directional Inspection System (ODIS) robot in Long Beach, CA. Members of the TARDEC Robotics Mobility Lab team conducted the test in cooperation with the California State University Long Beach (CSULB) Center for International Trade and Transportation, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).



Figure 3.

The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are responsible for moving more than 30 percent of U.S. trade goods. Routinely, queues of more than 100 54-foot container trucks extend for more than a mile from port entrances. These vehicles represent a considerable portion of local area traffic. This location is a prime target for terrorist attacks. A 10-lane U.S. Customs inspection point where a portion of the ODIS study was conducted is shown in Figure 1.

The CHP is responsible for inspecting these vehicles for roadworthiness, a dangerous and dirty job. Inspectors currently check container truck undercarriages using a "mirror on a stick." In many cases, the lack of resolution and clarity from the mirror requires the guard to further examine suspicious areas by physically getting under the truck as shown in Figure 2. In this line of work, the guards and inspection personnel put their lives in harm's way when examining suspicious vehicles.

Obviously, potential danger exists if the vehicle is armed with explosives or if the driver forgets to engage the parking brake correctly. Currently, such inspection checkpoints are the only method for securing and clearing trucks before they enter public roads or shipping docks/terminals.

During this study, ODIS demonstrated the capacity to rapidly and continuously screen convoys of trucks and exposed assets through the use of robotics. Onboard nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) sensors provided the guards with standoff capability, allowing them to remain a safe distance away from the vehicle while it's being inspected.



Figure 2.

Along with NBC and HAZMAT sensor data, ODIS also remotely communicates visual and thermal sensor data to operators using radio signals. Operators can use a hand-held Operator Control Unit (OCU) or a wearable vest-like OCU to teleoperate the robot. For a prototype robot 1 1/2-years-old the ODIS-T performed better than exemplary. Figure 3 depicts a CHP officer and a CSULB student using an OCU.

Use of advanced robotic platforms such as ODIS would be a force multiplier and measurably improve base and force protection at both inbound and outbound DOD and commercial logistics and transportation facilities. Robots continue to show great potential in providing this standoff security and inspection capability. CHP Officer Les Chambers stated, "I couldn't do what ODIS can with this particular rig." Inspection times with the robot versus the manual inspection are comparable but are much more thorough with the robot. During this study, 164 trucks were inspected with ODIS robots. Primarily, CSU students operated the robots, but several CHP and USCG operators participated as well. These seaport scenarios are representative of U.S. Transportation Command operations at the Port of Basra during current operations in Iraq.

DR. GRANT GERHART is a Science and Technology Expert in unmanned ground vehicles. He is the director of all programs at TARDEC's Robotics Mobility Lab.

BILL SMUDA is a Research Engineer at TARDEC's Robotics Mobility Lab, Research Business Group. He is the Lead Engineer for the ODIS robot and is a Ph.D. candidate in the Software Engineering Department at the Naval Postgraduate School.

JOSEPH ALEXANDER is an Intern at TARDEC's Robotics Mobility Lab. He has a B.S. in electrical engineering from Kettering University.

Vann-Olejasz Receives 2003 Hite Award

MAJ Sandra L. Vann-Olejasz received the *LTG Ronald V. Hite Award* at a ceremony held June 4, 2003, at Fort Leavenworth, KS. The award, established in March 1999, recognizes the outstanding Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) student attending the resident Command and General

Staff Officer Course (CGSOC). COL Mary Fuller, Acquisition Support Center (ASC) Director, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, presented the award.

COL Mary Fuller, ASC Director and Deputy Director of Acquisition Career Management, presents the *LTG Ronald V. Hite Award* to MAJ Sandra L. Vann-Olejasz during a ceremony at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS.



Vann-Olejasz received an individual plaque, a three-star AAC coin and congratulatory note from LTG John S. Caldwell Jr., Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM). Additionally, Vann-Olejasz's name was placed on a plaque permanently displayed at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC).

The award is named in honor of former DACM and AAC Director LTG Hite who was instrumental in establishing the Acquisition Education and Training Program (AETP) at CGSC. Vann-Olejasz was selected from 69 Army Acquisition Corps students attending the academic year 2002-2003 CGSOC. All AAC officers attending the resident CGSOC are eligible to compete for the award. Selection is based on a student's grade point average, contribution to group work, leadership skills, written communications, oral communications, research ability, recommendation of his or her academic counselor/evaluator and acquisition faculty consensus.

The AETP consists of a distinct AAC area of concentration within CGSOC and a fully funded master of arts degree-producing Acquisition Graduate Degree Program (AGDP) offered in conjunction with CGSOC.

AAC Officers Earn Graduate Degrees

In other Fort Leavenworth news, 22 AAC officers received acquisition-related master of arts (M.A.) or master of business administration (M.B.A.) degrees at a commencement ceremony held June 4, 2003, at CGSC.

Randy Wright, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director of Military Programs, gave the commencement address. Webster University conferred the degrees as part of the AGDP, a fully funded program that permits selected AAC students to complete an acquisition-related advanced degree concurrently with their attendance at the resident CGSOC.

M.A. in Procurement and Acquisitions Management

Blanchette, Robert MAJ
Broek, Harold MAJ
Chambers, Floyd MAJ
Fry, Christopher MAJ
Hughes, Frederick MAJ
Jamison, Vernon MAJ
Nelson, Scott MAJ
Oyler, Douglas MAJ
Peel, Kevin MAJ
Peters, Jeffrey MAJ
Robinson, W. Earl MAJ
Starostanko, Timothy MAJ

M.A. in Computer Resources and Information Management

Bennis, Darrell MAJ
Kelley, Thomas MAJ
Kerish, John MAJ
Stewart, Maurice MAJ
Tice, Michael MAJ
Terrell, Paul MAJ

M.B.A.

Cote, Courtney MAJ
Maloney, Patrick MAJ
Sloane, Michael MAJ
Spencer, Gary MAJ

AAC officers selected for resident CGSOC and interested in the AGDP should contact the Chief, Acquisition Education and Training Program, CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, at (913) 684-5330/5329 or DSN 552-5330/5329.



New Program to Develop Army Scientists and Engineers



Newly inducted Uniformed Army Scientist and Engineer Program officers. (Photo by MAJ J.D. Long)

On Oct. 1, 2003, GEN Paul J. Kern, Commander, U.S. Army Materiel Command, welcomed the first cadre of 33 officers into the Uniformed Army Scientist and Engineer (UAS&E) Program at the U.S. Military Academy. The Army of the future will have more than advanced technology and equipment. It will have advanced scientists and engineers.

"The uniformed Army scientist and engineer officer, equipped with field experience and an advanced engineering or hard-science degree, provides the Army with specialized technical skills and understanding," Kern said. "These officers enable our Army to make informed decisions on new and emerging technology and then to rapidly transition that technology from the laboratory to warfighters on the battlefield."

The UAS&E Program provides promotion opportunities through colonel and beyond. Approved in August 2003 as an area of concentration within the Army Acquisition Corps, the program enables the Army to develop and grow future leaders for its research and development communities and organizations charged with providing rapid, technological solutions to warfighters, such as the Rapid Equipping Force and the Agile Development Center.

The program will provide a cadre of military experts who will effectively bridge combat development, materiel development and technology implementation in field operations. These officers will search for cutting-edge technology to use on existing programs, thus

achieving real-time solutions to immediate battlefield requirements while providing technical leadership to meet future combat system program needs.

Kern noted that, historically, officers in the scientific or engineering fields could not compete with their operational peers and were eventually passed over for promotion. However, the Army's modern weapon systems and technology requires trained, technology-literate line officers and science, math and engineering-educated officers.

Kern credited Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Claude M. Bolton Jr. with making the program a reality. He said that Bolton's support and the hard work from many others led to the program's successful implementation.

The officers inducted at the ceremony hold doctorate degrees and experience in biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering management, biomedical, chemical, computer, electrical, materials, mechanical, robotics and software engineering.

"From their uniforms, it is also clear that they are soldiers with combat and field experience," Kern added. "Within this group are four Bronze Stars, one Bronze Star with a V device, one Purple Heart, deployment experience in *Operations Desert Shield*, *Desert Storm*, *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*."

Kern sees these officers as spearheading the Army's efforts to connect combat development, materiel development and technology implementation with rapid integration into field operations.

Kern challenged the members of the program to get vital technology and solutions to the field quickly. "Remember, our soldiers do not complain. They go to war and win with the equipment they are given," he said. "They are counting on you to provide them the best solutions and the best equipment in the shortest time possible. Together, we won't let them down," Kern concluded.

UAS&E officers will also serve in Army and DOD laboratories; the Army's Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM); the U.S. Military Academy; and Army, joint staff and key scientific and engineering advisory positions.

The above article was written by Karen Jolley Drewen, RDECOM Public Affairs Office.

Natick Workforce Given Opportunity to Laugh — at Themselves

As part of the Regional Training Program, the Natick Soldier Systems Center's Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (AL&T) Workforce enjoyed a Sept. 30, 2003, seminar by nationally known humorist, Loretta LaRoche, on how to be part of a team in today's environment.

LaRoche is an acclaimed speaker, consultant, author and television personality. She is an international stress management and humor consultant whose wit and irreverent humor has raised the humor potential in all of us. She spoke to the workforce on teaming, comically helping folks to recognize their own potential for disaster when trying to be a member of a successful team. Her wisdom and humor provide a common-sense view of life that leaves audiences inspired, motivated and roaring with laughter. Often irreverent — always hilarious — LaRoche helps people discover how thoughts, feelings and behaviors can affect work performance, relationships, success and self-worth.

She shows how humor can benefit the health of an organization and its employees and improve productivity in the workplace. There was an excellent turnout and the AL&T Workforce thoroughly enjoyed themselves, while taking away a fresh perspective on how to be successful in a teaming environment.

Center Celebrates Golden Anniversary

The Soldier Systems Center (SSC) in Natick, MA, celebrated its 50th anniversary with cake, music and stories from the battlefield at a packed Hunter Auditorium Oct. 21, 2003.

Kicked off by the singing of the national anthem by Massachusetts State Trooper Sgt. Dan Clark, a prayer by Chaplain (MAJ) John Wheatley and selections from the

Massachusetts State Pipes and Drum Corps, the program was a time to reflect on the past, speak about today and look to the future of what started as the Quartermaster Research Laboratory in 1953.

"All of you remain true to your mission — supporting the warfighter," said COL David Bongi, Acting Deputy Commanding General for Operational Readiness, Research Development and Engineering Command, and installation commander, in his opening remarks. "You make our warfighter more efficient, improve the quality of life and, indeed, save their lives by the work you do every day."

LTC Charles Dean, moderator, narrated a brief slide show highlighting achievements such as food irradiation and improvements made to boots. The show was sprinkled with video clips from former SSC employees discussing their work.

In one video segment, a helicopter pilot in Vietnam recalled how a steel protective plate strapped to his body stopped a .50 caliber bullet, saving his life. In another clip, a former Ranger and SSC employee recounted how his PASGT (Personnel Armor System, Ground Troops) helmet saved his life while in combat in Panama.

Judging from audience reaction, the stars of the morning were the soldiers invited to give testimonials of how the equipment developed at Natick affected them. Body armor was the common thread.

Caught in an ambush during fighting in *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, SGT SirVantis Dennis, 3rd Infantry Division, was struck squarely in the front of his Interceptor Body Armor vest by an unexploded rocket-propelled grenade, causing a bruise the size of the ceramic plate insert tucked inside the vest. In the same firefight, he was struck again, this time by a rifle round that was stopped by the plate.

"I guarantee you two strikes and I'm out," Dennis said. "I'd like to thank the Lord and the people who invented this piece of equipment. I'd like to thank you for all that you've done for us."

His tank getting pounded by Iraqis in a separate battle, SGT David Dellenbaugh, a gunner also with the 3rd Infantry Division, left the cabin to return fire and was struck by a rifle round on the outer edge of his protective

plate, the vest itself absorbed some of the impact. After discovering he was all right, he kept on firing. "There are no right words to say," Dellenbaugh told those assembled. "I just want to thank you for saving my life and keeping me in the fight."

Jumping into northern Iraq along with 1,000 fellow soldiers, PFC Christopher Taffoya, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 2nd Infantry, 503rd (Airborne) Battalion, benefited from the airdrop mission at the Soldier Systems Center. On the ground, his unit was tasked with starting a police force. When a grenade exploded nearby during a patrol, he was wounded in the legs but his body armor caught shrapnel in the lower back that would have severely injured or killed him. The equipment developed here "got me in safely and got me out," Taffoya said.

1ST SGT Colin Rich, 504th Parachute Infantry, survived a strike in the rear of his Modular Integrated Communications Helmet from a sniper rifle. He's still suffering from the injury's effects, but said he is amazed at how a helmet not designed to stop a large, high-velocity round protected him. "This facility has a profound impact on everybody in the military," Rich said. "Continue to increase our odds. Continue to make (our advantage) as lopsided as possible."

Dean showed a few animated clips depicting the future, with new and advanced ways to fuel, protect and equip warfighters to provide an overwhelming edge on the battlefield. "As with any anniversary celebration, we look ahead to the next half century, and the Soldier Systems Center will continue its tradition of excellence in all of our areas," Dean concluded.

This article was written by Curt Biberdorf, a writer and editor for the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center Public Affairs Office, Natick, MA.

